



**Paying price Jail for gold thieves**

A gang of female thieves is caught on CCTV distracting staff at a jewellers before stealing a tray of gold bangles worth £54,000. As two of the women



send the shop assistant away to fetch an item, the third reaches over a counter to grab a display tray. Then, as one of her accomplices opens her

headscarf wide to block the assistant's view, she empties its contents into a pocket hidden in her shirt before all three make off in a BMW driven by a

fourth member of their gang. Two Romanian women, Saina Sava, 38, and Sedra Niculescu, 28, were identified from the CCTV footage filmed at



Sunny Jewellers, in Belgrave Road, Leicester, on June 16. They were jailed for 16 months at Leicester Crown Court after they admitted theft.

The third woman and the driver have not been identified and none of the jewellery has been recovered.

Andy Bloxham

# Cambridge don fights the travellers' corner

By Richard Alleyne and Victoria Ward

TO THE travellers at Dale Farm he is a shaven-headed activist who helped to man their barricades and played a key role in their High Court battle against eviction.

But the man who calls himself Yoshka Pundrik is in fact Dr Jonathan Oppenheim, one of the world's leading physicists who works with Prof Stephen Hawking.

Dr Oppenheim, a Royal Society Research Fellow at the

Dr Jonathan Oppenheim, 37, is fighting the Dale Farm eviction which he has called 'racism'



University of Cambridge, is usually concerned with the intricacies of time, space and the universe.

But recently he has been focussing his forensic mind on something that some people consider equally complex: Britain's planning laws.

To the dismay of councillors and neighbours, his advice has already helped the gypsies win three last-minute reprieves.

When confronted by *The Daily Telegraph*, Dr Oppen-

heim, an expert in quantum information theory and quantum gravity, admitted his identity and said the travellers were victims of the last "socially acceptable form of racism".

"I don't live too far from the travellers and just felt it was wrong that they were being evicted," he said. "They can no longer live on the road because the law stops them and then the first generation settles down and they are evicted. I think it is shocking."

Dr Oppenheim, 37, who is from South Africa, came to the UK to work at the Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics, where Prof Hawking is a director.

He worked at the University of British Columbia in Canada before winning a grant from Britain's Royal Society.

Like Prof Hawking, he has an interest in the workings of black holes and quantum mechanics. He and fellow academics concentrate on a branch of mathematics and physics they invented known as quantum state-mirroring.

But this summer his research has moved from black holes to loopholes in the law that could stop the mass eviction of Europe's biggest unauthorised gypsy site.

More than 400 travellers have been fighting for 10 years to keep a six-acre site for their caravans, built on a former scrap metal yard but which is

technically green belt land. Dr Oppenheim has been helping man the barricades at the site in Basildon, Essex, as well as manage press coverage. He joins protesters including the former page three girl Marina Pepper, 43, and Susanna Mitchell-Cotts, a baronet's daughter. But his greatest contribution has been at the High Court where he has been poring over planning law books and papers to help advise on the case. Yesterday the travellers extended an injunction which prevents them from being evicted until next week.

"The eviction of Dale Farm is becoming increasingly untenable," he said. "We are proving that the residents had a reasonable expectation that they would get planning permission because everybody around them was getting it. The only reason they are not being

allowed to stay is because of racism against them."

As a student, Dr Oppenheim was involved in the Edible Ballot Society which encouraged the eating of ballot papers to highlight what were felt to be the inadequacies of the electoral system. He was

arrested in 1997, as part of anti-globalisation protests at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit, and helped smuggle a medieval catapult into the 2001 Summit of Americas to lob teddy bears onto the delegates.

After arriving in Britain, he was arrested after climbing on to and delaying a train as a protest against an arms fair in London. He makes no secret of his radical beliefs. In the acknowledgements to one of his research papers, he wrote: "And finally no thanks to APEC, the Big Cheese and the Mounties."

## Facebook pupils abused teachers

By Andy Bloxham

A PRIVATE school has warned parents to monitor their children's behaviour on Facebook after pupils were found to have published offensive comments about their teachers.

Pupils at Bedford High School for Girls, where fees reach £10,683 per year, described a biology teacher as a "p---"; said a Spanish teacher was a "racist b---"; and claimed they enjoyed school because the girls "all d--- around".

The Spanish teacher, Maria Gomez, who is head of modern languages, was singled out for particularly spiteful treatment.

One girl said the teacher had warned some of them about their behaviour together in class, saying: "Shes [sic] so moody for a spaniard [sic], and what action is she gonna take? Whine with her chorizo?"

girl for a few days while the others involved were given warnings, it is understood. The school is thought to have decided not to take a harder line because the girls, who are all 15, were talking to each other on personal Facebook pages rather than directing their comments to the teachers.

The head teacher, Julie Eldridge, refused to comment.

David Russell, the chief executive of the Bedford Charity (The Harpur Trust), which runs the school, warned parents that they should pay more attention to what their children were doing online.

"Facebook is a part of life now and we have to come to terms with its implications," he said. "One problem is that it's difficult, as a parent, to know when your child is on the computer doing homework or something else."

"We all perhaps need to

